



Digging

Karen Reese, CPDT-KA, ACDBC, Fear Free Certified Animal Trainer

Dogs that redecorate your landscape with digging can be incredibly frustrating and costly but, this is often a sign of boredom. Dogs need you to show them something more productive to do if they are participating in unwanted behaviors. Dogs that dig may not be able to find anything more entertaining to do so it is up to us to make sure that they have more appropriate ways to outlet their energy.

For dogs that dig, management of their behavior will play a large part in keeping your dog from digging. If your dog is in the yard, simply going in the yard with him will allow you to interrupt his behavior and encourage him to do something like play with a toy or even just go back inside. If you have a dog door or your dog stays outside for large amounts of time, consider finding an alternate solution for him. This may mean that he needs a separate fenced area in the yard or keeping the dog door closed when you aren't home. If you are looking to set up a separate fenced area for your dog there are smaller options available for purchase online or larger options usually available at big box hardware stores or feed stores.

Most dogs that are diggers have a need to get out their excess energy so you should consider getting your dog out for more exercise. Some solutions are taking your dog for extra walks but for dogs with excess energy this may not be enough. If your dog is dog friendly, dog parks could be a good idea but use caution when selecting a dog park since most are unmonitored. Another option for dog friendly dogs is a day or two per week at doggy daycare. This serves as management since your dog is out of the house for a few days per week as well as exercise. There are several sporting options for dogs that don't require much more than some extra time and training fees. Sports like nosework are easy and fun and can easily be practiced at home. For more athletic dogs there is competition obedience, tricks training, or even something as simple as regular obedience classes. These classes will help you teach your dog lots of fun things to do but it will also exercise their mind allowing them to rest while they are at home and conserve their energy for training.

For some homes building a dig box may be just what your dog needs. Read this article by Whole Dog Journal, August 2008, about building your dog a dig box; https://www.whole-dog-journal.com/issues/11_8/features/Destructive-Digging-Solutions_16052-1.html

For behavior and training advice, please contact Operation Kindness at behavior@operationkindness.org or visit www.operationkindness.org/training.